

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **More About Old Pianos**

The story of the old pianos which are still in Monterey and the one in the Pioneer Society museum in San Francisco, are still an interesting subject and an historical one. The one in San Francisco was the prized possession of the Don Jose Abrego's grand-daughter, the late Mrs. Dulca Abrego Dans of Tres Pinos, San Benito County. The instrument was made by Brell-Kopf and Haertel, of Leipzig and was imported by Braum and Focke of Baltimore. The pedals are of brass, and two brass candle holders project from its front above the keyboard, on either side. Abrego paid \$600 for the piano upon its arrival in Monterey.

On either side of the candlesticks Don Jose Abrego had caused to have this inscription: "In 1841 Captain William Smith arrived with his vessel in Monterey, and I engaged him to bring me a piano on his next trip to this country. In March, 1842, he returned in a brigantine; he had three pianos on board. I bought this one for \$600. He then sailed for San Francisco, where Gen. Vallejo purchased another of the pianos and the third was sold to K. de Celis in Los Angeles."

The piano owned by Abrego was a small instrument of German make and probably difficult to keep in tune, so later Abrego bought another piano of about the 1850 period, for his home. This piano is now in the old Custom House, and a gift to the State of California by Don Jose's grandson, Edward Abrego of Oakland. It is a George M. Guild square piano No. 5900 made in Boston, now at the Custom House. George M. Guild was at 550 Washington street and changed to Guild and Church in 1870 and still later changed to Guild Piano Company. This piano was made about 1865.

In the Sala Grande at the Stevenson House on Houston Street in Monterey is another antique piano which formerly belonged in the Casa Soberanes home on Pacific street in Monterey. This piano is a square, Wilkins and Newhall, No. 1028, made about 1847. The piano was originally owned by D. Edward Turner Bale, who lived in Monterey in the early 1840's. Wilkins and Newhall manufactured it at 25 Temple street, Boston, in 1852; this company had many different addresses and was also known as Gould Wilder & Co.

Mrs. Bale was an aunt of the Soberanes children. She often visited the Soberanes family in Monterey and discovered that they all were especially fond of music, but had no piano, all stringed instruments. Each evening they would set around the fire in the sala and play and play good music especially for their father who appreciated their talents.

Seeing all this joyful family life she said that if a member of the family would come to Napa County where she lived she would give them a piano. An 18-year-old Soberanes boy drove a team of horses attached to a wagon all the way there and returned, all alone, with the piano. It remained in Casa Serrano until the adobe was purchased by Mrs. Jean Booth Serrano in 1921. After passing through several ownerships it finally came into the possession of the Monterey History and Art Association and is on loan to the Stevenson House.

There is a beautiful old Chickering piano in Casa Serrano, the headquarters of the Monterey History and Art Association. It was given to the association by Frank Work when the Serrano Adobe was first acquired and is greatly admired by all who visit this old historic building.

There is an excellent exhibit of old colored glass in the Casa Serrano at the present time to which members and friends are invited to see. The Casa is open Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 1 until 4 o'clock.